A Husband's Letters to a Wife Destined to Fame

The Early Days When "Pat" Was Struggling in Africa and Mrs. "Pat" Was Beginning That Amazing Career Which Brought All England to Her Feet

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notes of what I did not understand. It was a strange medley of my uncle's books that I took into that room: J. W. Cross's "Life of George Eliot," Lewis's "Life of Goethe," "English Humorists of the Eighteenth Century," "Corinne," Walt Whitman, Keats, Longfellow, Emerson, Shakespeare, Milton, Tennyson, Daudet and Balzac, &c.

Our long evenings at home were spent either at the piano or playing chess, or listening to my mother singing to her guitar, or to my uncle reading aloud. We talked a lot of nonsense, too. He was wise and witty, and listened with grave eyes full of affection; I think he knew there was something in my heart I could not speak of, and he wondered what outlet I would find. We loved arguments and discussions, and then there were beloved cats and dogs and other pets.

On my return from Paris a cousin of my father, Mrs. Eliza Hogarth, a woman of some means, heard me play the piano and offered to have me trained, so it was arranged that I should go to the Guildhall School of Music twice a week from Dulwich for my lessons. After the second term my music master suggested that I go in with 365 other girls, for a scholarship, which would give me three years' free musical tuition in Leipsic. I won the scholarship. Why I never took it up belongs to another chapter.

At a card party I first met my future husband, Patrick Campbell. His father had been manager in Hongkong of the Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China. He had retired and owned a large place, Belmont Stranraer; also an old fashioned house with large lawns and trees and bushes, "Elerslie," on Sydenham Hill.

When I first met Pat he was 20, I was 17. He had just left Wellington. His brother Alan Campbell, of the Seventy-second Highlanders, had distinguished himself at Tel-el Kebir.

Pat was good looking. He had an unusually well bred and gentle manner and a great love for his home and people and a passion for his dead mother. His father had married again and there were many step-children—all were dear to Pat.

A devoted old keeper at Belmont had taught him the names of birds and wild flowers—a black speck in the sky I could scarcely see had its name, its character and its ways for Pat; a little flower that to me was just a color, for him was a little life with its family and its home.

Pat managed a boat like a magician. I remember a wonderful long day on the Thames. Pat looked only at me—the boat went without effort or sound, quick and straight—in the locks we seemed alone—silence was between me—the golden glory of the dawn before passion is born——

We picked wild flowers together. I remember a little bird flying into my hand and Pat's words, "Even the wild birds love you!"

We eloped within four months of our first meeting and were married at St. Helen's Church, Bishopsgate street.

One thing I can never forget—my mother's face and her heartbroken cry when I told her.

After more than thirty-five years of life—with its battles, its wounds, its sickening pain—it is not easy to write of the joy of that first love.

Incapable of pause or reckoning, with the divine faith and courage of fearless children, we faced the world we thought ours and paid the price bravely.

Slowly came the awakening to the responsibility of the two children, born within three years, and a delicate husband ordered abroad for his health, and the dawning knowledge that the responsibility of those two children's lives was mine.

I can remember vividly a hot summer night. I could not sleep. The moon shone through the open window and I lay trying to see into the future. At about 2 o'clock I was overcome with restless anxiety, I slipped out of bed, taking care not to awaken Pat, and, throwing on a wrap, crept downstairs and opened the door of the garden.

I walked up and down that narrow little garden, every now and then looking up at the window of the room where my husband and little son were asleep, until daylight, thinking and wondering what was to be done. I knew Pat was not strong enough to continue working in the city and that *I* must help. I could not imagine what work I could do. I had given up my musical scholarship, and so I was not qualified for a musical career. My lovely baby and other coming in a few weeks must be provided for. I was bewildered—lost.

With the daylight something entered my soul, and has never since left me—it seemed to cover me like a fine veil of steel, giving me a strange sense of security. Slowly I became conscious that within *myself* lay the strength I needed and that I must never be afraid.

Was it the birth of self-reliance—or that giant spirit—"the sense of responsibility" beating against my heart, or the call of my "secret"? I cannot say. I know I went quietly back to bed in the gray light of the morning with a new courage and a new hope.

Pat was earning less than £100 a year in the city, and his delicate health was alarming. His mother had died of consumption three years after his birth, and I fancy this preyed on my mind. The failure of the old Oriental Bank had practically ruined my father-in-law.

Then my little girl was born—"a little Queen, with such beautiful hands," my mother said.

About two months later I was asked to play the leading part at the Anomalies Dramatic Club, owing to one of the members having fallen ill. I felt very unhappy and uncertain. The idea seemed to terrify me. My friends said it would cheer me up and amuse me.

One of Mrs. "Pat's" most memorable scenes in "Beyond Human Power." *Courtesy Theatre Magazine.*

Some one, I don't know who, had fixed in my mind when I was very young that Art was a "form of prayer," and I couldn't regard it as an amusement, but my seriousness was overcome in the end by Pat, who persuaded me to accept.

The Anomalies Dramatic Club was composed of 365 members, who each paid a subscription of £3 3s. a year. The club gave three performances a year of two plays. The performance took place in the Town Hall.

This extract from *The Stage* shows that I met with some success:

"'In his Power,' by Mark Quinton, 18th November, 1886. The Anomalies are fortunate in counting Mrs. Campbell as one of their members. It was this lady's first appearance on any stage on Thursday, and her performance was therefore the more extraordinary. Mrs. Campbell possesses a natural depth of pathos and yet a power and earnestness, which, joined to a graceful, easy manner and charming presence, render her a most valuable acquisition."

Pat's health became worse, and at last he was ordered by the doctor to take a sea voyage. It was suggested he should go to Brisbane, where a relative of his, William Ross, was at the moment. The thought of the parting was misery to us both, but the state of his health seemed to make it imperative. It was arranged that if Pat succeeded in finding work the children and I would join him.

The day he left my sister and I went to the station to see him off. I don't know how it happened, but we missed him. I fainted in the station. Some one in nurse's uniform lifted my head and gave me water. I can remember well the agony in my heart and brain as I realized the tragedy of the parting.

The following telegram is among my old papers:

"Good-bye, darling; did my best to see you. Dare not miss another train. Perhaps it was better. PAT."

Had any of us realized the sort of difficulties a boy of Pat's nature would have to encounter, with no capital and delicate health, we never would have let him go on from Brisbane to Sydney and then on to Mashonaland. He and I both believed with the optimism of children in every new venture he undertook. I was sure he would make enough to send for me and the children soon.

And in those first years of our pain our dream of the joy of reunion gave our hearts courage.

The following are a few extracts from the hundreds of letters Pat wrote to me during the six and a half years he was away. The world has invented many strange stories about me, so the truth of our young lives and struggle may be of interest.

"Brisbane,
"15th December, 1887.

"Fairly good news, my own, own darling. I have got a berth in the B. I. Company's office, £2 a week to commence with, and I think it will increase soon. I started to work yesterday. Some of the fellows seem very nice; the hours are from 9 to 5:30. It isn't very much, darling, but anyway it is a start.

"I got all your dear, sweet letters today, five forwarded on from Aden and one direct to Brisbane. My darling, do you know what these letters are to me?

"The old *Duke of Buccleuch* went away to-day. It made me quite sad all day. They would willingly have taken me back to England with them. It took all my strength of will not to go with them.

"Act as much as you like. I know you love me; that is enough."

N. B.—After Pat left England I played again with the Anomalies Dramatic Company in "Blow for Blow," "A Buried Talent" and "The Money Spinner."

"Brisbane,
"21st February, 1888.

"My own darling:

"I have been laid up in bed for the last ten days with a touch of colored fever, but I am all right now, only it has left me very weak. You need not be frightened, the climate seems to suit me splendidly. They say most young fellows get a touch of fever when they first come out.

"It was awful work being laid up without you to look after me. I was very bad for three days, off my head altogether. One or two people were very kind. I am rather glad I have had it, as one has to go through it, and it might have been much worse.

"Nothing new out here."

Three months afterward he wrote:

"Kimberley,
"17th September, 1888.

"My own darling:

"I got your sweet letter on Saturday, inclosing the one written to you by my father. I am writing him a long letter by this mail.

"You will have got Ross's cable to my father about my billet by now. I do hope, my darling, it was a comfort.

"I get £300 a year to start. My predecessor, who was only five months in the company, and then lost the post through drink, got a rise of £50 at the end of three months. I do hope I get the same. Ross thinks I will be able to get something better soon. Things are very dull just now. The elections are on next month.

"This seems a splendid place for making money. I do hope I can only get a start. I know Ross will put me in the way of anything good.

"Stella, wife, will you ever forgive the misery I have been the cause of to you? Darling, I will try and make up for it all when I have you with me again. Oh, when will it be?

"I am so glad to know that the acting has made you happier. PAT."

Then Pat went on to Mashonaland, sometimes prospecting with vain hopes of concessions and settlements, and later I heard of his big game shooting with Selous. How he must have loved that!

Then followed many weeks and no letters, and Pat could only send money very irregularly. So at last it was decided that I should take up the stage professionally, and I had already written asking for Pat's permission, which he had given. And I started my career. I had already gained some experience and success in my performances at the Anomalies Dramatic Club.

Sir Herbert Tree in one of his notable characterizations of "Colonel Newcome." He is frequently mentioned in Mrs. Campbell's memoirs.

The famous Drury Lane Theater, where Mrs. Campbell enjoyed many of her notable successes.

The following letter from my dear old friend, "Aunt Kate," gives a vivid impression of the attitude taken by some people toward the theatrical profession in those days:

"34 Avenue de Villiers,
"Paris,
"8th October, 1886.

"My dear Beatrice,

"Since I received your first letter I have felt almost unable to write. The shock it gave me I could never explain to you, nor would you understand it. Nor did I quite realize before *how* dear you were to me. I should hardly have believed that losing you would, after all, have caused me such infinite pain.

"Poor, unfortunate child, may God help you, if, as you say, the die for evil is cast! I can only pray, as the only chance to save you, that you make too decided a failure ever to try again.

"Good God, how could you think I could write and wish you success? *How thankful I feel* that it was not whilst with *me* that you took the wrong turning. Mrs. Hogarth is a vulgar mind—she made, too, in one of her letters observations which decided me about her. I forget, but to the effect that it mattered little about you if you got money.

"But your mother! I should have thought her the *very last* to allow you to enter on such a path!

"Ah, well, I do not think any one ever loved my poor little child as I did. Although our meetings were difficult, I knew you were there—I felt I had one other tie to earth. And when you were the first rate musician which I have never doubted your becoming I hoped you might have played with glory at concerts, and over here, what a joy to have heard you—and your praise! For *that* would have been honest and reputable praise. Whilst gaining which you could have held up your head in any society. Oh, my poor Beatrice, you can form no idea—you have yet to learn—the shame, the humiliation of seeing yourself despised by decent people.

"Even the admiration of the mob will not make up for it to you. You have too much intelligence for that, and, I had thought, too much pride.

"I now see your reason for leaving me so many weeks without a letter; you would not hint at it till too late. And yet, of course, no remonstrance would ever stop you! How could they allow and encourage your first home attempts?

"How can a woman bid with pleasure farewell to her best and happiest heritage—name, reputation, affection—to allow her every look and movement to be criticized by all the common jeering mouths and minds of the public! And this was once dear little Beatrice—the poor little girl who spent one happy year in Paris with her 'Aunt Kate!'

"What a dream it will be to you in your future riotous life? In fact I am wretched—such a sorrow and disappointment of what I thought in store for my darling. However, let me have my own feelings alone—they are nothing in the matter; and the past is gone. I must try to forget that dream.

"Should you succeed there may at last be money; but what is that to those around you all? Is your future nothing, your happiness?

"Well, Texas would have been better than this! On the receipt of your letter of six weeks back I told Charley you had some secret plan in view of 'exquisite joy.' I said, almost with bated breath, 'Is it the stage—an actress?' He looked grave, and said I had no right to imagine such a thing. Beatrice was frivolous, but he knew you better than that your nature would ever let you sink to *that*, so low. And now he has listened, but answered not a word, and only looked doubly grave.

"Oh, think what a charm your music might have cast on all circles where you entered! And I should have felt my poor old heart beat with pleasure when you told me. God forbid I should tell any more than necessary of this your last horrid fancy!

"A painful effort this letter is. But I would not write until a day or two had a little cooled and calmed me. I am anything but strong yet.

"See what it is to let a young child grow up without any guidance. Parents cannot begin too young. Here is nature, with so much in it loving and good—which might have been turned for happiness to herself and all around! And now lost. Can I who knew and appreciated it (alas! all too late) be otherwise than sad and miserable? Would that I could have kept you ever here with me.

"I must bid you good-bye, Beatrice, believe me, with much sorrow and sympathy with you and your ill-governed impulses. I may have said harsh or painful things. I grieve to cause you pain, my dear, but you rightly were expecting it must be so. You know my disgust for that class to which you are going to ally yourself—our disgust. I might say—and to think that one we loved, and had lately in our midst, goes, and with pleasure, into such a set—to be one of them!

"Then forgive me if I speak my mind; I never could flatter or pretend what I did not feel. What I do feel most painfully is grief for you. And also much sympathy for you in the wretched life which you must have been going through.

But my words and thoughts can matter little now—you will be in too great a state of over-excitement to think of calm lives such as ours over here.

"May your health not break down (or, who knows? that might be the best thing)!

"With heartfelt anguish and sorrow and pity for yourself, dear Beatrice, also much sympathy, for you must suffer deeply! You cannot leave all promise of youth and kindred—all the past—for such a life—and be happy! Oh, no, I feel much for the heart, which I fancied I knew better than others did, and which I surely had found. Poor, dear child, good-bye. I cannot see for my tears. Oh, Beatrice, how could you? I loved you too truly not to grieve bitterly the breaking of your young life, which to me millions could never make up for.

"Your still fond aunt,
"KATHERINE BAILEY."

I was given an introduction by Mr. F. W. Macklin, a good actor who sometimes played for the Anomalies Dramatic Club, to an agent, Harrington Baily, whose office was in a street off the Strand, the idea being that I should pay a guinea fee, put my name down on his books, tell him what experience I had had as an amateur, and he would take note of my appearance, &c., and let me know when he had anything to offer.

As I was looking for his number, I saw a poor cat in the gutter by the pavement licking two little drowned kittens; she was mewing over them pitiably. This upset me. I found Mr. Baily's door and went

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